



# VISN 19 Network Director Update

April 2009

Glen W. Grippen

## National:

VA Secretary Shinseki is "pinned" by Deb Kupecz, Chief Logistics Officer, VISN 19 during the 2009 Winter Sports Clinic (WSC). The Secretary reported he truly enjoyed his participation in his first WSC and was very impressed by the accomplishments and spirit of the veterans he met at the WSC.



April 9, 2009 - President Obama & Secretary Shinseki Announced the Creation of a Joint Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record along with Secretary Gates. The Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs have taken the first step in creating a Joint Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record. Currently, there is no comprehensive system in place that allows for a streamlined transition of health care records between DOD and the VA. Both Departments will work together to define and build a system that will ultimately contain administrative and medical information from the day an individual enters military service throughout their military career, and after they leave the military.

April 20, 2009 - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched its new "Returning Veterans" Web site -- [www.oefoif.va.gov](http://www.oefoif.va.gov) -- to welcome home Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with a social, Veteran-centric Web site focusing on their needs and questions. The Web site will feature videos, Veteran stories, and a blog where Veterans are encouraged to post feedback. The site also will restructure the traditional index-of-benefits format found on other VA pages into question-based, categorized, and easily navigated links by topic. This will allow Veterans to find benefits of interest easily and discover related benefits as they explore.

## VISN 19:

### Information on H1N1 FLU for VA Staff and Veterans

VA has established two toll-free call centers (open 8 am to 8 pm EST) related to H1N1 flu:

- For veterans: 1-(800)-507-4571
- For VA staff: 1-(866)-233-0152 - VA employees should also be in communication with their supervisors, if they are ill, need to take leave, or have questions specific to their facility or office.

The main Federal web site for information is [www.cdc.gov/H1N1](http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1) and the main VA Internet site is [www.publichealth.va.gov](http://www.publichealth.va.gov) and, for VA staff only, [vaww.vhaco.va.gov/pubhealth/swineflu/index.htm](http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/pubhealth/swineflu/index.htm)

VISN 19 hosted the VHA Western VISN Spring Cluster Meeting on 4/28/09. This is a leadership meeting of 7 Western VISNS and is attended by VISN and facility leadership. There were approximately 150 attendees.



**Mr. Glen Grippen, Network  
Director 19**

VISN 19 has continued to implement various aspects of the VISN 19

Expansion of Services Plan. Eight rural health proposals were submitted following a call from the VACO Office of Rural Health. All proposals had a strong emphasis on telemedicine. Our priority remains providing the best services to veterans through quality care and access to care.

## ECHCS:

Fitzsimons: Joint Venture Team (JVT) and ECHCS Project staff met with the Office of Construction and Facilities Management in DC to discuss phasing of

project. The Denver project is one of VA's top priorities. Face to face meetings will be held every 4-6 weeks in order to keep project on track.

A new space plan is being developed for the Inpatient Tower, diagnostic and treatment building, and Research Tower. User group meetings for Phase A were completed last week. The JVT showed room by room layouts and services, offered feedback for change and improvements in future workflow. The overall goal in this phase is laying out workflow and placement of services to include patient safety and improve the patient's health care experience. A planning meeting will be held in Chicago on May 12<sup>th</sup> to continue to design layout of all buildings.

The historical significance of site buildings is also being considered as a Contractor will be hired to document the buildings under consideration as having historical significance including the Judge Advocate's Building.

The Community Living Center will be constructed in Phase A and could possibly be activated in 2012. JVT is scheduled to turn the entire building project over to the facility by 9/1/2013. Activation could take 3-6 months. We could see an opening in winter/spring of 2014.

Several dates in August have been proposed to the Secretary for a groundbreaking ceremony on the Fitzsimons campus. No date has been set as of yet.



### **Colorado Springs:**

Colorado Springs (COS) Health Care Center: the new 'expanded clinic' in Colorado Springs will be almost 3 times as large as the present facilities. Planning continues to evolve with many unknowns as ECHCS continues to explore a variety of approaches to meeting the needs of the veterans in the southern part of the state. Meetings continue with the staff to identify most efficient use of space. Once finalized plans are complete, an RFP will be released for the expanded clinic. The completion forecast date is 2012.

VA continues to work with DoD on various sharing opportunities. Plans for a VA/DoD Ambulatory Surgery Collaboration Project in Colorado Springs was submitted by the 10<sup>TH</sup> Medical Group / VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System as a Joint Incentive Funds project.

In this project, the VA will make use of unused operating rooms at the 10 MDG to accommodate surgery procedures for veterans and share procedure rooms in the general surgery clinic.

Submissions are forwarded through the appropriate DoD channels for review to ensure compliance with established Incentive Fund proposal requirements. Decision pending.

The VA/DoD Disability Evaluation Service program is on track to implement June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Most of the ECHCS staff and VBA staff are hired and/or coming onboard within the next 2 weeks. ECHCS and VBA staff have been and are scheduled to attend EACH/Fort Carson orientation. Equipment and computers are onboard. The space is ready on Fort Carson including the new MEB building (Bldg. 1162). We will be ready to see the first Soldier on June 1st. A Ribbon cutting ceremony is being planned for week of June 29<sup>th</sup>.



### **VA Montana Health Care System:**

Billings Montana Phase I Health Care Center. The trusses for the new health care center have been installed and roof sheathing is complete; exterior wall framing is done; interior wall framing is underway; masonry work is also underway as well as city sidewalk curbs and gutters installation. Construction remains on track for opening date of September 2009.

### **Sheridan VAMC:**





Veterans in the northeastern corner of Wyoming will have a new state of the art clinic in Gillette in the fall of 2009. The new clinic will be 3,600 square feet with ample exam rooms and space to expand. The clinic will also feature a special room for tele-medicine and tele-mental health.

Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink! Not the case at the Sheridan VAMC. The medical center was recently awarded the EPA's water quality Excellence Award for 2008. The award recognizes the purity of the water and lack of bacteria that can cause illness. Not to be one's to be satisfied with excellence, the facility will be installing a new water treatment plant this summer to ensure continued high standards of water quality.

### **VASLCHCS:**

The George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center opened the doors on a brand new state of the art SICU in 2009.



The extra space and new equipment has created a greater working environment and has lead to greater patient satisfaction, and privacy.



Also the Salt Lake City VAHCS has started two related HSR&D informatics centers in 2009. Together they will improve our ability to perform informatics research nationwide. Veterans' Informatics, Information, and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI) is a 5-year, \$34 million

dollar project to provide researchers with improved access to nearly comprehensive VA patient data.

The Consortium for Healthcare Informatics Research (CHIR) is a major new HSR&D and ORD initiative. The goal of CHIR is to conduct research that unlocks the information content of VA electronic health records in order to advance knowledge that improves care of veterans. CHIR investigators will push the envelope on use of natural language processing techniques to extract information from free text. Overall leadership and coordination for CHIR is headquartered at the VA in Salt Lake City. Salt Lake City Health Care System hosted Congressional staff visits from Congressman Matheson's office to the St. George's CBOC on 4/9/09 and to the medical center from Senator Bennett's staff on 4/10/09.



### **Grand Junction VAMC:**

This facility has been in the public's eye this past month. Senator Udall visited the Grand Junction VAMC on 4/7/09 and was impressed with the facility and services. Senator Bennet visited the Craig, Colorado Telehealth Outreach Clinic and was impressed with the equipment and services. A local radio station (KRAI) did an interview on the benefits of the new Lifetime Electronic Record for Veterans.



### **Cheyenne VAMC:**

The new Ambulatory Care Addition final floor plan review was completed on April 22, 2009 and the Army Corp of Engineers is planning to send out RFP's for the design/build contract on June 24, 2009. Contract award

for the design/build is due no later than September 23, 2009 and right now, construction completion date is scheduled for approximately September 2010. The new Ambulatory Care Addition is designed to provide an expansion of 22,000 square feet of exam room and cardiopulmonary specialty rooms.

The Mobile Health Clinic project continues to progress nicely. Staffing for the mobile clinic is underway. The health tech position recently closed, interviews will take place in early May for the nursing staff and a new mobile health clinic coordinator has also been selected. The delivery date of the vehicle is still slated for mid-July.

Four sites have been selected where the mobile clinic will go. Sterling (CO) as well as the Wyoming towns of Torrington, Wheatland and Laramie. MOU's with the owners of the physical addresses where the mobile clinic will be parked are currently under review with VA legal counsel. Construction at the sites to establish internet connectivity and power will begin in the near future.

Cheyenne VAMC hosted Senator Mark Udall during a visit to the Fort Collins CBOC on 4/14/09. The tour and briefing went well.